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House of Representatives

DEMOCRATS WANT TO HELP LOWER PRESCRIPTION DRUGS PRICES FOR AMERICA'S SENIORS

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FILNER. Madam Speaker, millions of American seniors are trying to make the best of the Medicare prescription drug plan that congressional Republicans and President Bush signed into law 3 years ago.

Today, seniors are demanding changes in this program. They want a plan that does not create a giant gap in coverage, where they can lose coverage for months on end and where they still must pay their monthly payments.

The giant doughnut hole, as we call it, leaves many seniors in the predicament of paying for groceries, paying their rent or the drugs they need to live healthier and longer lives. They may cut their pills into two or take them every second or third day. That is a recipe for disaster, and this is not a decision that seniors should have to make in America today.

Democrats have long opposed this doughnut hole, and one of our top priorities next year is to eliminate it by making prescription drugs cheaper. How are we going to do this? It is simple. We are going to do the same thing the Veterans Administration does today, and that is, give the Secretary of Health and Human Services the ability to negotiate on behalf of all seniors for lower drug prices.

Today, American veterans pay 42 percent less for their drugs because of this negotiating authority. If we make prescription drugs cheaper, we can fill in the doughnut hole so seniors no longer fall into it. This is one of our top priorities as we become the majority party in Congress next year.